

U.S. PATENT APPLICATION

for

HANDHELD COMPUTER WITH POP-UP USER INTERFACE

Inventors: Francis James Canova, Jr.

HANDHELD COMPUTER WITH POP-UP USER INTERFACE

BACKGROUND

[0001] Handheld computing devices, "palmtops," "palmhelds," personal digital assistants (PDAs), or handheld computers 5 typically weigh less than a pound and fit in a pocket. These handhelds generally provide some combination of personal information management, database functions, word processing, and spreadsheets as well as voice memo recording, wireless e-mail, and wireless telephony functions. Because of the small size and portability of handhelds, strict adherence to 10 hardware constraints such as memory and processor size must be maintained.

[0002] Conventional handheld computing devices can include a display and screen or touch screen. The display is provided behind the touch screen. A portion of the display can be dedicated for an 15 entry area or user interface which allows a user to input text to the handheld computing device. For example, various conventional handheld computing devices manufactured by Palm, Inc. include a graffiti pad in a fixed location on its touch screen. The graffiti pad can include an area for providing letters (text) and an area for providing numbers (text) and can 20 further include handwriting recognition software to interpret the user inputs. For example, the Palm® III device and Palm® V device include a graffiti pad fixed to a bottom quarter of the display. Letters and numbers can be input using a stylus or finger. The fixed graffiti area requires space on the display and touch pad. Further, the fixed graffiti area 25 cannot be enlarged if necessary.

[0003] In addition, conventional handheld computing devices manufactured by Palm, Inc. include a keyboard interface

duplicating a QWERTY-style keyboard that is selectively provided on the display. The keyboard interface is displayed in response to the selection of a keyboard option from a menu and/or an icon when an input is provided. Therefore, when inputting data a user can select the keyboard interface through which text can be entered. With the Palm, after the user selects a key marked done on the keyboard, the keyboard is no longer displayed.

[0004] Other conventional handheld computing devices such as handheld computing devices manufactured by Hewlett Packard 10 have included a pop-up user interface icon. A floating icon on the screen is touched. One such device is the HP Omni-Go device. Therefore, by user request, a device through software can provide a box which floats on the screen. However, a user was often confused because the placement of the small floating icon is difficult to predict on the screen.

[0005] Thus, there is a need for a dynamic user interface 15 which can be removed or enlarged on the display/touch screen of a handheld computing device. Further, there is a need for an elegant way for engaging or activating a user interface area such as a keyboard or a graffiti area. Further, there is a need for a graffiti area that can be moved 20 and can have multiple sizes.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] An exemplary embodiment relates to a handheld computer system. The handheld computer system includes a switch, a user interface, a housing, and a display. The display is supported by the 25 housing. The user interface includes a text entry area. The text entry area is activated in response to the manipulation of the switch, the switch being a non-display element.

[0007] Another exemplary embodiment relates to a method of interfacing with the handheld computer system. The handheld computer system includes a display and a touch pad. The method includes manipulating a user interface device to cause a suitable area for 5 receiving handwritten characters to be displayed on the display above or behind the touch pad and providing handwritten characters on the touch pad and the means for activating and deactivating is not located on the display.

[0008] Another exemplary embodiment relates to a user 10 interface for a handheld computer system. The handheld computer system includes a display and a touch pad. The user interface includes means for receiving handwritten characters on the touch pad and means for activating and deactivating the means for receiving, wherein the means for receiving is reduced in size or removed from the display when 15 deactivated wherein the user interface device is not located on the display.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] The invention will become more fully understood from the following detailed description, taken in conjunction with the 20 accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numerals refer to like elements, in which:

[0010] FIG. 1 is a schematic general block diagram of a handheld computer including a display and a touch screen, the display and the touch screen providing a text entry area that can be activated and 25 deactivated in accordance with an exemplary embodiment;

[0011] FIG. 2 is a flow diagram representative of the operation of the handheld computer illustrated in FIG. 1;

[0012] FIG. 3 is a schematic planar front elevation view of the handheld computer illustrated in FIG. 1, showing a display with a 5 lateral pressure-sensitive switch for activating and deactivating the text entry area entry area activated;

[0013] FIG. 4 is a schematic planar front elevation view of the handheld computer illustrated in FIG. 3 showing an activated text entry area;

10 [0014] FIG. 5 is a schematic planar front elevation view of the handheld computer illustrated in FIG. 1 with an elongated switch for activating and deactivating the text entry area, in accordance with another exemplary embodiment;

15 [0015] FIG. 6 is a schematic planar front elevation view of the handheld computer illustrated in FIG. 1 with a switch for activating and deactivating the text entry area, the text entry area occupying a top portion of the display and touch screen in accordance with another exemplary embodiment, showing a user interface;

20 [0016] FIG. 7 is a schematic planar front elevation view of the handheld computer illustrated in accordance with yet another exemplary embodiment, with a switch for activating the text entry area, the text entry area being of variable sizes, wherein the interface area is provided at a top of the screen;

25 [0017] FIG. 8 is a schematic planar front elevation view of the handheld computer illustrated in FIG. 1 with a circular switch for activating and deactivating the text entry area in accordance with yet

another exemplary embodiment, wherein the interface area is provided in multiple sizes; and

5 [0018] FIG. 9 is a planar front elevation view of a handheld computer illustrated in FIG. 1 with a switch on lateral sides of the computer, the switch being for activation and deactivation of the text entry area, in accordance with still another exemplary embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

10 [0019] Referring to FIG. 1, a handheld computer 100 is depicted according to an exemplary embodiment. Handheld computer 100 may include Palm style computers manufactured by Palm, Inc., of Santa Clara, California. Other exemplary embodiments may include Windows CE handheld computers, or other handheld computers and personal digital assistants, as well as mobile telephones, web access phones, pagers, and other mobile computing or communication devices.

15 Computer 100 can include a user interface 102, a processor 104, and a display 114. User interface 103 provides data or commands to processor 104 which controls display 114. Interface 102 can include a switch 119, function keys 112, as well as a text entry area 118 provided on display 114 (see FIG. 3).

20 [0020] Computer 100 can include a user interface 102, a processor 104, and a display 114. User interface 102 provides data or commands to processor 104 which controls display 114. Interface 102 can include a switch 119, function keys 112 as well as a text entry area 118 provided on display 114 (see FIG. 3).

25 [0021] Preferably, handheld computer 100 includes interactive hardware and software that performs functions such as

maintaining calendars, phone lists, task lists, note pads, calculator applications, spreadsheets, games, video files, and other applications capable of running on a computing device. Further, handheld computer 100 may be configured for such functions as voice memo recording and 5 playback as well as communications network connectivity, Internet connectivity, wireless messaging, e-mail, always-on e-mail, and wireless telephony. In one embodiment, computer 100 includes at least the functionality of the PALM® M105, PALM® III, PALM® V, PALM® M505, PALM® M500, or PALM® VII series handheld computing devices.

10 [0022] Handheld computer 100, depicted in FIG. 3, includes a plurality of input function keys 112 and display 114 having graphical user interface features. Display 114 can be a monochrome or color LED display or OLED display. Display 114 may be provided with a touch screen interface that allows a user to select and alter displayed 15 content using a pointer, such as but not limited to a stylus, a pen tip, a fingertip, or other pointing devices.

20 [0023] Referring to FIGs. 1 and 3, in an exemplary embodiment, display 114 also includes a data entry area, such as, area 118 for tracing alpha-numeric characters as input. Area 118 can be a Graffiti™ text entry (or other handwriting recognition software) area optionally including a first portion for entering letters (text) and a second portion for entering numbers (text).

25 [0024] A plurality of input icons 116 for performing automated or preprogrammed functions may be provided on a portion of display 114 (see, e.g., FIG. 4). Display 114 can also include a text entry area, such as a keyboard provided on display 114 designating areas of the touch screen interface for particular letters. The keyboard can be

accessible via switch 119 discussed below or through a menu or icon activated command.

[0025] In an exemplary embodiment, handheld computer 100 may include an integrated antenna 120 (FIG. 3) configured to 5 transmit and receive wireless communication signals, such as, but not limited to, cellular telephone communication signals and other radio frequency (RF) communications signals using an RF transceiver. Antenna 120 may further include an indicator light 122 integrated into antenna 120 for indicating the transmission and reception of wireless 10 communication signals. Further, light 122 may be used to indicate other states of handheld computer 100.

[0026] In an exemplary embodiment, handheld computer 100 also includes navigation buttons 124 that may be utilized for navigating or scrolling of information displayed on display 114. Further, 15 navigation buttons 124 may be programmed for other uses depending on the application running on handheld computer 100. Handheld computer 100 may be used for any of a variety of wireless communications, including, but not limited to, communications with the World Wide Web, mobile telephone communications, e-mail communications, etc.

20 [0027] Advantageously, handheld computer 100 includes a switch 119 for activating and deactivating a text entry area such as entry area 118. Switch 119 can be a variety of devices for indicating whether entry area 118 should be activated or deactivated. For example, switch 119 can be a pressure activated switch or sensor, a push button, 25 a mechanical switch, a sliding switch, a space bar type switch, a capacitive sensor, or other manipulatable device.

[0028] Computer 100 can be designed to operate in a toggle mode in which switch 119 is pressed or engaged to cause entry

area 118 to appear on display 114. Display 114 continues to display entry area 118 until switch 119 is engaged again or another switch is manipulated.

5 [0029] The toggle mode is particularly advantageous for users who only have one hand free, are disabled, or otherwise cannot engage switch 119 while entering data into writing section 118. Alternatively, entry area 118 can be made to disappear by touching a box, or other symbol in the writing area. In another embodiment, computer 100 operates in a non-toggle mode in which entry area 118 is 10 continuously displayed as switch 119 is engaged. Once switch 119 is no longer engaged, entry area 118 is removed from display 114. In the non-toggle mode, ergonomic efficiency is enhanced as area 118 pops-up in response to switch 119 being engaged when the user picks up computer 100 is in a writing position.

15 [0030] Preferably, computer 100 includes software for causing entry area 118 to be activated or deactivated in response to the manipulations of switch 119. Preferably, switch 119 is a pressure activated sensor or switch located on a side housing of handheld computer 100.

20 [0031] With reference to FIGs. 1 and 2, operation of system 100 is described below. At a step 200, a user engages a portion of user interface 102 such as switch 119 to begin entry of text in area 118. When switch 118 of user interface 102 is engaged, entry area 118 is displayed on display 114 at step 204. Entry area 118 can be displayed 25 in a variety of sizes and a variety of locations. For example, display 118 can be provided as a keyboard, or a graffiti area at a bottom or top of display 114. In another example, display 204 can cause an application area of display 114 to scroll up as entry area 118 is displayed on bottom

of display 114. Entry area 118 can appear in a pop-up effect or be scrolled from a top, side or bottom.

5 [0032] At a step 206, text such as letters or numbers or symbols can be entered on area 118. After the user enters text in step 206, the user can release switch 119 or at a step 208 to cause entry area to be removed from display at a step 210. Alternatively, the user can manipulate switch 119 again to cause entry area 118 to be removed or touch another portion of user interface 118.

10 [0033] With reference to FIGs. 3-9, various embodiments are shown including switch 119 of various shapes and sizes and entry area 118 of various sizes and placements on display 114. Further, switch 119 can be placed at various locations on computer 100. The embodiment shown in FIGs. 3-9 can be combined with each other without departing from the scope of the invention. Although shown as examples, 15 the embodiments of FIGs. 3-9 are examples only and are not by any means the only examples of writing areas 118 and switches 119.

20 [0034] With reference to FIGs. 3 and 4, handheld computer 100 is shown with switch 119 disengaged (FIG. 3) and with switch 119 engaged (FIG. 4). In FIG. 3, switch 119 is a pressure sensitive switch located on at least one lateral side 121 of computer 100. The use of switch 119 allows the user to immediately engage entry area 119 without having to look for an icon on display 114.

25 [0035] With reference to FIG. 4, when lateral side 121 is deformed due to pressure provided by user, entry area 118 is displayed upon a bottom portion of display 114. In another embodiment, lateral side 121 is not deformed in response to pressure, however switch 118 senses pressure. One example of a pressure sensitive switch can be a

substantive deformation of lateral side 121. Computer 100 can be configured to sense the application of a squeezing motion by the user.

5 [0036] Handheld computer 100 in FIGs. 3 and 4 is preferably operative in non-toggle mode in which area 118 is only displayed as switch 118 is engaged or senses pressure. In this way, when computer 100 is held and squeezed by a user in one hand, entry area 118 is provided which allows text to be entered by the other hand of the user. Such an elegant approach allows the user to engage and disengage the entry area 118 in response to natural motions associated 10 with picking up handheld computer 100 and writing or pressing keys.

15 [0037] With reference to FIG. 5, handheld computer 100 includes switch 119 embodied as a spacebar switch or elongated switch on a side 123 handheld computer 100. Alternatively, switch 119 can be provided on a bottom surface or a lateral surface of handheld computer 100.

20 [0038] In this embodiment, computer 100 can operate in a toggled or non-toggled mode. In the toggled mode, when switch 119 is pressed such as by the thumb of the user as computer 100 is held, entry area 118 is displayed on screen 114. When switch 119 is released or disengaged, entry area 118 disappears. In a toggled-mode, when switch 119 is pressed once, entry area 118 is displayed until switch 119 is pressed again. Computer 100 can be configured for use in the toggle or non-toggle mode.

25 [0039] With reference to FIG. 6, handheld computer 100 includes a switch 119 which is provided on a side 125 of computer 100. Switch 118 in FIG. 6 is not quite as elongated as in FIG. 5. In addition, handheld computer 100 is configured so that entry area 118 is provided

on a top portion of display 114, rather than on a bottom portion as shown in FIGs. 1-5.

5 [0040] Alternatively, entry area 118 can be provided on a middle portion of display 114 or a side portion of display 114. In one embodiment, the location of entry area 118 can be configured through a menu selection or by dragging area 118 to a desired location.

10 [0041] With reference to FIG. 7, handheld computer 100 utilizes any of buttons 112, 120 or 124 to provide entry area 118. In this embodiment, buttons 112 or 124 operate as switch 119. Further, in FIG. 7, handheld computer 100 includes an enlarged entry area 118 which does not include icons such as icons 116 shown in FIGs. 1-6. Preferably, entry area 118 includes icons such as boxes 127 provided on screen 114 to indicate the size of entry area 118. For example, in FIG. 7, two sizes are selectable, such as a size associated with entry area 118 in FIG. 6 15 and a size associated with entry area 118 in FIG. 7. A third box can be utilized to make entry area 118 disappear.

20 [0042] With reference to FIG. 8, handheld computer 100 includes a circular push button switch 119 located at a top portion 131 of computer 100. With reference to FIG. 9, switch 119 extends from a lateral side 121 and 137. In FIG. 9, switch 119 can be a slidable switch, or a deformable push switch or a pressure sensor. Computer 100 in FIG. 9 can operate in a toggle or non-toggle mode.

25 [0043] While the detailed drawings, specific examples and particular formulations given describe preferred and exemplary embodiments, they serve the purpose of illustration only. The inventions disclosed are not limited to the specific forms shown. For example, the methods may be performed in any of a variety of sequence of steps. The hardware and software configurations shown and described may differ

depending on the chosen performance characteristics and physical characteristics of the computing devices. For example, the type of computing device, communication bus, or processor used may differ. The systems methods depicted and described are not limited to the precise 5 details and conditions disclosed. Furthermore, other substitutions, modifications, changes, and omissions may be made in the design, operating conditions, and arrangement of the exemplary embodiments without departing from the scope of the invention as expressed in the appended claims.